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**What is the Role of the Cuban  
Revolutionary Armed Forces  
(FAR) in a Post-Castro Cuba? ...  
What Role Will the  
U.S. Military (USM) Play?**

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What is the Role of the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) in a Post-Castro Cuba?...What Role Will the U.S. Military (USM) Play?

ABSTRACT: Russia has all but abandoned its Caribbean friend and ally, Fidel Castro. The island is suffering economically: it is only a matter of time till the Castro brothers see the end of their thirty three year old Socialist Revolution.

The United States continues its decades long trade embargo against the Communist island, and shows little sign of beginning to normalize relations with Castro. The U.S. Congress has written several laws over the years that restrict any formal relations between the two countries until Communism is gone and democracy is attempted. The political and economic power of the one million or so Cuban-Americans - living primarily in southern Florida - will have to be dealt with before any bilateral talks can be successful.

The real question is, what will the 100,000 plus Cuban Military do in the event that Fidel Castro dies, retires, or goes out in a blaze of Cuban Revolutionary style glory in a suicide attack on the Gringo base at Guantanamo Bay? The Cuban Military has a strong, well-traveled officer corps whose senior officers owe their position in Cuban society and government to the continued support by the Castro brothers. U. S. relations have improved with the former Soviet Union: an attempt should be made this year to initiate informal military-to-military relations to pave the way for an immediate response to whatever follow-on government attempts to emerge once Fidel Castro is gone.

Captain John Edward O'Neil, Jr., U.S. Navy

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## INTRODUCTION

Much has been written about the on-going economic struggles of the Cuban people, who are now attempting to cope with little financial help from their former Soviet ally in the post-Cold War emerging "New World Order". Little, however, has been written about the role the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) will play in a post-Castro Cuba. Furthermore, little has been published in open print about the role the U.S. Military (USM) could play. U.S. foreign policy continues the 30 year old "embargo against the island nation as a legitimate response to anti-American Cuban behavior and will be continued" (Goshko, A26). It is hoped that this economic isolation of Cuba, will eventually cause the fall of Castro's Marxist-Leninist revolution, and bring true democracy to the island. This paper discusses the roles that the FAR could take in a post-Castro Cuba as well as the roles that the USM could follow.

### **o Cuba without Fidel Castro**

I begin by assuming Cuba is without Fidel Castro. The respective roles the FAR might play will be defined by the way in which Castro leaves power. The circumstances of his departure and the subsequent events are very important for Cuba (the FAR, the Cuban people, and their future), as well as for the United States (our military, the Cuban-American exiles, and our foreign policy). I will look at five scenarios that assume Fidel Castro is gone from Cuba's leadership position.

These scenarios are listed in ascending order of concern to the

FAR (and the United States Government [USG])).

1. **Castro retires:** passes the reins to his hand-picked successor, with little or no change in Cuba's government.

a. What is the FAR's role?

b. USG concerns (USM contingency role)?

2. **Castro dies of natural causes:** will there be a peaceful transition or will factional fighting (civil war) breakout?

a. FAR role, active or passive? How will power pass - peacefully or with fighting.

b. USG response (USM plans)?

3. **Popular revolution:** civil war? The oppressed masses are led by a pro-reform leader. Is this really a viable possibility?

a. FAR response - suppress or join in?

b. USG response (USM contingency options).

4. **Castro is assassinated:** total chaos and civil war could easily sweep the country.

a. FAR involvement? Was this a wide-spread, top leadership event? Was there participation from foreign sources (Cuban exile groups)?

b. USG position (USM contingency options).

5. **"Socialism or Death".** Castro has used "Socialism or Death" as his revolutionary battle-cry for the past three years. **Academics who have interviewed Fidel Castro, believe that he will never leave Cuba as an exile - death then, may be his only way out.** Thus, the worst case would be if Castro decides to go out in a blaze of glory in a manner he believes is befitting a "Hero of the Revolution".



a. FAR role - go with Fidel Castro or not?

b. USG response (USM contingency options).

This paper begins with a review of U.S. national security interests, historical relations between the United States and Cuba, the Cuban military, Cuba's economy, and Cuban national politics. I will discuss courses of actions that the FAR could follow, as well as appropriate options for the USG (USM) to consider in a Cuba without Castro. After all, the FAR has a considerable number of people under arms, with a still sizeable number of aircraft, military equipments, artillery pieces, small warships and submarines (albeit aging) without replacement parts, but with plenty of ammunition - all of which could cause serious Western Hemispheric stability problems.

The FAR has previously been involved with drug trafficking. With little Cuban government money available to maintain FAR equipment and its status, it is conceivable that the FAR could get involved with the drug lords for personal or governmental gain.

Cuba and its people previously had a special relationship with America from 1898 to 1959. While the past 34 years have been fraught with wild emotion, strong rhetoric, and the real potential for armed conflict, we now have the opportunity to prepare ourselves for peacefully living together. When the inevitable change of government comes in Cuba, the USG must be ready to work with the new government. Our military could also be called upon to play a significant role in assisting or dealing with the Cuban government (and the FAR).

## U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY INTERESTS

The Twentieth Century has seen the rise and fall of both Fascism and Communism. "The vision of the world to which the United States aspires is one of freedom, respect for human rights, free markets, and the rule of law... the United States must ensure its security as a free and independent nation, and the protection of its fundamental values, institutions, and people" (National Military Strategy, 1993). There are many other factors which affect the national security of the U.S., and through our active leadership role we desire:

1. "Global and regional stability which encourages peaceful change and progress.
2. Open, democratic and representative political systems worldwide.
3. An open international trading and economic system which benefits all participants.
4. An enduring global faith in America - that it can and will lead in a collective response to the world's crises" (National Military Strategy, 3). We must work to increase the prestige and influence of the Organization of American States (OAS) to promote and defend the growth of regional democracy. Haiti and Cuba must return to democracy - peacefully.

o Does Cuba Still Have a Strategic, Political, and/or  
Economic Interest for the U.S.?

Cuba is geographically positioned at the Eastern entrance to the Gulf of Mexico along the Tropic of Cancer, and at the Northeastern

approaches to the Caribbean basin. For centuries both merchant and warship fleets have used the Windward Passage at the eastern tip of Cuba to transit into the Caribbean basin towards the Panamanian Isthmus. This geographical fact of life will remain important, and perhaps more so, when the Panama Canal is returned to the Panamanians at the end of this decade. With the Canal no longer under the US administration, our only Caribbean bases will be at Guantanamo Bay and Roosevelt Roads, PR. The strategic geographic features of the Island of Cuba include:

- being only 90 miles from Key West, Florida.
- 10.7 million people - a significant potential market for U.S. products and services.
- the U.S. Naval Base, Guantanamo Bay, located at the southeastern edge of Cuba in the busy Windward Passage. The base provides a large facility totally dedicated to Fleet training, counter narcotics operations, and has ready access to the Caribbean Basin, both by sea and air.
- large amounts of arms and military equipment. Even though repair parts can no longer be provided by Russia; significant military capability remains that could cause regional stability problems in the Western Hemisphere.
- potential for terrorism - Cuba's military personnel could hire themselves out for the best price: waging wars for hire; may even become associates of the drug king-pins.
- becoming an open way station for drug shipments to the U.S.

**Summary: Cuba is still of vital national interest to America.**

## U.S. POLICY TOWARDS CUBA

U.S policy towards Cuba has its origins in the very beginning of the 19th century and with our experiences with our other Latin American neighbors. The USG is opposed to "Castro at every turn", and will not "pursue normal diplomatic relations until his dictatorship is done" (Malpass, 437).

### o U.S./Latin-American History

During the early days of our Republic, men like John Quincy Adams worked for the annexation of Cuba to the United States. However, the opportunity never presented itself in large measure due to the divisive issue of slavery. Following the U.S. Civil War, the United States initiated a series of conferences beginning with the First International Conference of American States (then known as the American Bureau) in Washington, D.C. in 1889 and 1890 to create friendly economic, cultural, and political relations with one another. Following our short war with Spain, Cuba was a United States protectorate from 1898-1928. There were seven International Conferences of American States hosted by the Pan American Union (named as such in 1910) held between 1889 and 1933. After 30 years of hemispheric unrest, often with direct U.S troop intervention, the seventh Pan-American Conference in Montevideo in 1933, put forward the "Good Neighbor" Policy (promoted by President F.D. Roosevelt), agreeing that no country had the right to interfere in the affairs of another. The Pan American Union attempted to assist the 20 or so Latin American republics by improving their citizens' lives and maintaining a good relationship with their huge American

friend to the North.

In 1934, as interest in our Caribbean colonization period waned, the United States abrogated the 1902 Platt Amendment that had placed a provision in the Cuban Constitution allowing the United States to directly intervene in any Cuban policies affecting our interests. The United States was now preoccupied with working its way out from under the effects of the Great Depression, observing from afar the rise of Fascism and Communism in Europe, but tacitly approving new dictators in the Western Hemisphere because of the national and regional stability they provided. Cuba had several "strongmen" as leaders from 1934 to 1959.

Following the end of WW II, the United States and other Western powers became committed to containing the Communist movement being led by the United Soviet Socialist Republic. Representatives at a Mexico City meeting in 1945 realized the Inter-American system needed strengthening. The first step in this direction was a treaty designed to meet acts of aggression. In 1947, representatives drew up the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, or Rio Treaty, which declared an armed attack on one member is an attack against all. The ninth Inter-American Conference met at Bogota in 1948. This conference consolidated many years of progress by setting up the Organization Of American States (OAS). In 1954, the 10th Inter-American Conference adopted an anti-Communist resolution at the insistence of the United States. In 1960, the OAS took its first collective action against a country, by imposing diplomatic sanctions against the Dominican

Republic, then under the control of the dictator Rafael Trujillo.

The U.S. concern with communism, came home to roost, when Fidel Castro declared his Communist Revolution in the early 1960's. Castro soon began training agents from other Latin American nations in sabotage and guerilla warfare. Relations between the United States, the Soviet Union and Cuba became very tense in late 1962. The OAS unanimously supported a naval quarantine to prevent Russian offensive weapons from entering Cuba, resulting in the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962. As reviewed above, with the strong tradition of Western Hemispheric conferences and cooperation, the key to resolving a 'Cuba after Castro' crisis is to act in consonance with members of the OAS: or maybe even bilateral meetings between the United States and Cuba - possibly meeting together, say in Mexico.

o **Tightening the Chokehold on Cuba: Cuban Democracy Act of 1992**

Several members of the U.S. Congress have expressed concern that the United States does not keep Cuba at the top of the American foreign policy list. In his opening statement of his subcommittees's hearings on the Western Hemisphere (Cuba), Robert G. Torricelli (D-NJ) stated in May 1992, *"I share a common goal with each of our witnesses today: the goal of reducing the days of the Americas' last dictator to the hundreds rather than the thousands".*

Congress and South Florida's politically and economically powerful Cuban-American community worked for over a year and half to formally strengthen the decades-long U.S. trade embargo against Cuba. The new law asks the U.S. President to "encourage" other

countries not to trade with Cuba, bans the foreign subsidiaries of American companies from trading with Cuba, and "expands U.S. mail and telephone services and allows for assistance to 'support ...individuals and organizations' who 'promote nonviolent democratic change in Cuba'" (Gugliotta, A15). Not every Congressman believes this tightening of the embargo will hasten the fall of Castro's government: instead it may fuel Cuban resentment towards the United States.

Visitors to Cuba say the Cubans are adamant that their economic troubles are caused by the decades - old U.S. trade embargo. Additionally, other nations - such as Canada, Argentina, Japan, and Germany are actively trading with Cuba in spite of our "encouragement" to the contrary. Recent travelers to Cuba, say there are few consumer goods available on the island, but that some American goods were seen, possibly imported from U.S.-owned industrial subsidiaries in other Caribbean and European nations.

#### CUBA'S MILITARY

The Cuban military has played a very important social and political role in the Cuban national government throughout the Twentieth Century. Fidel Castro has maintained tight control of the FAR through his brother Raul for the past 30 years.

The Spanish heritage and machismo tradition of the Cuban male is strong: the long struggle the Cubans went through to become independent from Spain is ingrained in their national psyche. Some say this strong feeling for their Spanish heritage has caused an inbred vendetta mentality. Thus, it would be unlikely that a

foreign based force could conduct a successful military intervention on the island - without a lot of casualties on both sides. There could also be trouble if the exiles assume they can return to Cuba and seize their former homes or possessions; it would be difficult for both exile and islander to overlook perceived or real damages done to each in the past.

In its travels to Europe and Africa, the Cuban military saw there are differences between the revolutionary rhetoric of Castro and with what it was seeing first-hand outside of Cuba. These people know that the FAR's present force levels of some 128,000 active duty people cannot continue to be maintained or even be needed in an island nation of ten million. There are 100,000 men and women on active duty in the Cuban Army backed by 125,000 in their Reserve and home guard/militia. The Navy and Air Force active duty forces have 13,000 and 15,000 people respectively.

With the virtual end of Russian military support, a general decline in the military capabilities of the Cuban military can be expected. Without spare parts, large numbers of Cuban Air Force fighter and support aircraft will have to be laid-up. The shortage of petroleum products will reduce pilot training (flying hours), reduce army field exercises, and cause the Cuban Navy to remain tied fast to its piers.

Recently, *"the Cuban military leadership has seen its status and position in Cuban society decline"* (Kost and Pales). Formerly, the term of service of Cuban conscripts was three years, but recently this has been reduced to two years. There have been early



retirements or even demotions for officers and early discharges for enlisted personnel (similar to the personnel reductions in the USM). Kost and Pales also remind us of the many setbacks suffered by the FAR: the defeat of Cuban forces in Grenada, the pull-out in Angola, the defection of several high-ranking officers, and the execution of Division General Ochoa for corruption and drug trafficking. All of these events have lowered the overall morale of the FAR and placed doubt in the minds of the Cubans as to the effectiveness of their military. Still, the FAR remains behind Castro as long as he can ensure their privileged position in Cuban life.

#### A LAST BASTION OF COMMUNISM GETS A LOT LONELIER

The Soviet Union (Russia), Cuba's former longtime economic, military, and political supporter is no longer economically a superpower. Massive Soviet aid has been the buttress that supported Castro, but this assistance has been significantly reduced.

##### **o No More Soviet Aid for Cuba**

Castro's traditional ally, the Soviet Union, previously provided over \$6 billion in annual subsidies. This generous package provided social welfare and economic benefits which were superior both to those available to the average Cuban under the 1950's Batista regime, as well as to those who live in neighboring islands, such as Haiti, and Central American republics. "Until 1990, the Soviets shipped thirteen million tons of oil a year to Cuba..." (Oppenheimer, 227). "Carlos Lage, a member of the Cuban

politburo and the economics chief, said in a recent interview on Cuban television that oil imports have dropped to 6 million tons in 1992" (Farah, A15). Cuba once exported sugar, some citrus, tobacco and nickel to the Soviets, and came close to balancing what Castro received from his benefactor. Perestroika disrupted and eventually stopped Soviet production and its distribution system, causing its subsidized exports to Cuba to slow, arrive late, and practically stop.

#### **o Cuba in Crisis**

The Communist inspired - and Cuban supported - revolutionary fever that periodically swept Latin America during the past 30 years, has subsided. Although Nicaragua, Panama, Belize, and other emerging republics still need the continuing interest of their largest neighbor to the north, the only long-standing Communist "success" from these years of turmoil in the Western Hemisphere, is Castro's regime.

Recently, "...Coast Guard officials said, 2,205 Cubans had taken to the waters in inner tubes and small boats this year, a record since Mariel, when Cuban President Fidel Castro allowed hundreds of thousands of Cubans, some criminals and others mentally ill, to leave the communist-ruled island" (Booth, A3). This corresponds to the growing numbers of people who have illegally left Cuba: 467 in 1990 and 2417 in 1991. Among the newly arrived was Jorge Ivan Lacera who "said he came to the United States because there was nothing left for him in Cuba: no work, no future, no amenities. Everything was a struggle. There were snitches and spies and

*repression, he said" (Booth, A3).*

Castro actively encourages all of these departures. Political activists, malcontents, and counter-revolutionary reactionaries are allowed to leave, thereby skimming the scum off the top of his simmering stewpot of potential troublemakers. Castro has undoubtedly defused potential political problems over the years by encouraging these emigrations.

With the large, vocal, and politically active group of Cuban - Americans in South Florida, any dramatic escape attempt by a Cuban quickly gains the support of the U.S. media. An example of this phenomena involved Major Orestes Lorenzo Perez, formerly of the Cuban Air Force. He gained national media coverage in March 1991, when he flew his MIG-23 jet fighter to the U.S. Naval Air Station in Key West, FL. A year and a half later, on 20 December, 1992, the former fighter pilot flew a civilian aircraft back to Cuba to make a dramatic rescue of his wife and two sons from a busy road. *"Lorenzo said he fears worsening conditions in Cuba will lead to civil unrest. He said he had a premonition that he had to get his wife and sons, who were being harassed, out of Cuba now or it would be too late"* (Booth, A1). The point to be made here is that Cuba is in trouble and a brave man risked his life to retrieve his family before it was too late.

#### **o The Cuban Economy**

Long lines for practically all manufactured and agricultural goods exist throughout Cuba. Rationed items - eggs, fish, canned meats, biscuits, cream cheese, rum, undergarments, soap, medicines

-- are scarce. Energy shortages have plagued Havana - busses, cars and trucks are seen less on the highways of Cuba. Extensive use of motorcycles with sidecars, bicycles and the domesticating of 100,000 bulls as beasts of burden are being used to lessen the affect of the oil shortfall. A declining economic output, growing unemployment, and devaluation of the Cuban peso, are plaguing the Cuban people.

Sugar was and is the principal cash crop of Cuba. With the loss of Russian demand for Cuban sugar and other products, Castro has adopted a variety of economic policies to provide a stimulus for the economy, thereby propping up his dictatorship. Attempts are being made to revitalize the tourist industry with large loans from Spanish businessmen. Castro and his economic advisers are also trying to diversify the Cuban export market by expanding its output of biotech products and pharmaceuticals. Castro is even allowing foreign oil companies to hunt for oil! This from the man who nationalized the petroleum refineries of several U.S. oil companies in the early 1960's.

#### WHO WILL GOVERN CUBA AFTER CASTRO IS GONE?

##### o National Politics in Cuba

Cuba was the last Latin American colony to win its independence from Spain. Spain had fought very hard to maintain its large colony in the midst of the Northern Caribbean, but Cuba became independent in 1902 just the same, some 80 years after most of the other Latin American countries. Cuba's political leaders have traditionally shown a predilection for political zeal and a strong

sense of exaggerated self-worth. Cuban revolutionaries, such as Jose Marti, Antonio Maceo, and Maximo Gomez led suicidal frontal attacks against well-entrenched Spanish positions during their struggle with Spain in the late 19th century. In August 1951, "Senator Eduardo Chibas, the leader of the opposition against Batista, shot himself on the air in an attempt to change the course of Cuban history." (Oppenheimer 132). None of this machismo tradition has been lost on Fidel Castro.

Castro watched the disintegration of the Soviet Union with concern, but vowed to maintain his Marxist state. "Now that the capitalists and imperialists think that the ideas of socialism, communism and Marxism-Leninism are collapsing, we are more confident than ever in the ideas of Marxism-Leninism", he told workers in Havana on November 7, 1989. Several weeks later he insisted that it was Cuba's destiny "to carry out the role that history has assigned to us ... as unbending first-line defenders of the poor and exploited of this world." (Oppenheimer 132). Castro, the longest serving leader in Cuban history, has always shown an inflated view of self-worth: death may be the only honorable way out to fit his sense of worth to Cuban history.

#### o Dissent in Cuba

The first real indication of a possible threat to Castro's leadership of the Cuban people, occurred on July 13th 1989, when the Angolan war hero, Division General Arnaldo Ochoa Sanchez, 49, one of the most decorated - and popular - officers in the Cuban military was executed for corruption and drug trafficking. "Never

in the history of the three decades-old Marxist regime had such a high-ranking officer been brought before a firing squad" (Oppenheimer, 18). This execution "shook Cuba like nothing since the 1959 Communist revolution" (Oppenheimer, 19). Castro's fervent denunciations of Ochoa's alleged corruption while in Angola, as well as in Cuba, confused his people. Oppenheimer said the Ochoa execution was seen by many Cubans, military and civilian alike, as the start of the same disintegration process that the Soviet Union had experienced.

Following the Ochoa execution, Castro strengthened the top leadership of the powerful Ministry of the Interior (MININT), and changed the head of the Cuban Customs Service, as well as some senior FAR officers. Castro had become paranoid. He demanded blood-oath loyalty pledges from his senior officers. His personal guard was expanded. "An ambulance, a van with an electric generator aboard, and a small truck with a movable radio station were now part of his official traveling entourage. It was Castro's portable presidential palace: in the event of a military uprising, he could take control of the country from wherever he was" (Oppenheimer, 20). Castro's tightening of the economy, his media blitzes against corruption, and the slow disintegration of the public trust, began to drive cracks in the Cubans' support for Castro. Repression is very sophisticated in Cuba. A carefully balanced mix of "carrots and sticks" is used by the Castro regime to reward political and military fealty.

As organized political opposition to the state government in Cuba

is not legal, there is not yet a serious threat to Castro. However, after the failed Soviet coup in August 1991, two political coalitions were founded in Cuba to encourage a more liberal national government. These two organizations favor a peaceful transition to democracy via nation-wide elections and a market economy. The more conservative group, the Cuban Democratic Coalition, opposes direct dialogue with the Castro government. The other group, the Cuban Democratic Convergence, is more social democratic, and favors negotiations among all Cubans in order to achieve a democratic transition. Neither of these groups have united around a single leader. If such a person became a contender for the Cuban leadership, he may find himself in the same situation as General Ochoa, whose rising national popularity evidently posed a threat to Castro.

A potential external problem for Cuba in any post-Castro scenario could come from the Cuban-American exiles, who are mostly white, living primarily in southern Florida. These exiles, however well-intentioned, are not particularly well-thought of in their native island. The most out-spoken and somewhat controversial of these exile groups is the politically connected Cuban American National Foundation (CANAF), led by the millionaire construction company owner, Cuban immigrant, Jorge Mas Canosa. In 1992 this group has raised a political war chest of sizeable note: even donating "\$26,750 to New Jersey Congressman Robert Torricelli, principal sponsor of the Cuban Democracy Act" (Booth, 57).

These two Cuban dissident groups established more formal contact

with the Cuban exile groups in both the United States and Europe. CANAF gained ties with the Cuban Democratic Coalition, a group made up of six small center-right parties. A Madrid based Cuban Democratic platform (led by journalist Alberto Montaner) and the Miami headquartered Independent and Democratic Coalition (led by former military officer and political prisoner Huber Matos), each have ties with the Cuban Democratic Convergence. Even the minuscule Cuban Roman Catholic Church has become more open in its insistence on civil rights, and encourages democratic trends for the Cuban state.

My research has not uncovered any political or military leader(s) in Cuba, ready to replace Fidel Castro. However, Oppenheimer writes that reformers during the Fourth Congress of Cuba's Communist Party in 1991, such as the economic minister, Carlos Lage, Communist Youth leader Roberto Robaina, and Union of Cuban writers and Artists president Abel Prieto, were leading attempts to offer changes to the Cuban government. These reformers at the Congress were undoubtedly concerned with their individual futures - when Fidel Castro's Social Revolution dies. We should remember that exile groups can be expected to attempt to join the post-Castro Cuban ball game - with or without participation by the United States. *"In mid-1991, Mas Canosa unveiled a 'Social, Political and Economic Program for the Reconstruction of Cuba'. It included signing a free-trade agreement with the United States and sending more than 10,000 Cuban-exile professionals - accountants, lawyers, bankers and business people - to teach the islanders how*



to adapt virtually all Cuban institutions to a free-market economy" (Oppenheimer, 328). My research has found that the CANAF probably has a more detailed plan - including money for a post-Castro Cuba - than the United States government. The United States must be prepared with appropriate options to immediately respond to a new Cuban government, and be ready to temper the sure-to-be exuberant enthusiasm of the Cuban-American exiles for their former homeland.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTIONARY ARMED FORCES (FAR) IN A POST-CASTRO CUBA? ... WHAT ROLE WILL THE U.S. MILITARY (USM) PLAY?

1. Castro retires and passes the reins to his hand-picked successor, with little or no change in Cuba's government.

As discussed earlier, while this is potentially the least-bloody of the five post-Castro Cuba scenarios, Fidel Castro is not likely to step down, retire to the Spanish Rivera, or assume a "Presidente Emeritus" status. However, if Fidel Castro does pass control to a hand-picked successor, allows Raul Castro to remain head of the FAR, and remains outside the day-to-day running of the country, the new leader will probably have a chance to conduct democratic reforms, albeit very slowly. While Castro would almost certainly appoint a successor close in spirit to his socialist ideals, this person would undoubtedly be a generation younger, and thus more attuned to a market economy and political reform. Recent travelers to Cuba report that while the Cuban markets are bare and the spirit of Cuban nationalism is strong, the Cuban people may be ready to try something new.

Along with Cuba's relatively well-educated and highly skilled population, I feel this hand-picked successor could eventually build a coalition with the nascent political movement, now surfacing within Cuba. Liaison with the FAR could ensure a provisional democratic government. After Castro's demise, this hybrid coalition could call a constitutional congress to reorganize the Cuban government.

a. FAR role: The FAR would remain under the control of Raul Castro, wary of any significant attempts to immediately switch to a free-market economy, or worse, affect political reforms to build a true democracy. The FAR is very much aware of the loss of prestige that the armed forces of the former Soviet Union suffered in its fall from the top of the communist government power structure. Even though the FAR too suffers under the present economic conditions in Cuba, they will not want to lose more ground in a new government. We should remember that Fidel Castro would still be on the island, and he would continue to monitor the progress of his appointee.

Additionally, Raul's role would be to maintain control of the FAR to keep the army in position to step in if the new leader needed help or drifted too far with democratic reforms. Still both brothers, now in their mid-60's, can not remain in power forever. They will eventually lose their influence, and the new leadership could then gradually adapt the government to the economic needs and political desires of the Cuban population.

All of the close interaction of the Cuban-American exiles with

the American political process has not been lost on the other exile groups or the Cuban islanders themselves. There would undoubtedly be much controversy if the Cuban exile groups barged directly into the power vacuum caused by the departure or death of Castro. The Afro-Cuban and mulatto islanders, who have had their lives improved by the Revolution, feel that those who had abandoned the hardships of Castro's revolution do not have the automatic right to participate in the rebuilding of the Cuban nation. The impact of these exile groups in a Castro-free Cuba could be traumatic.

b. United States Government (USM) response. The United States should initiate overtures in the next year to establish closer links to the Cuban military - even with Fidel Castro still in power. These overtures could begin along the same lines that the United States Coast Guard (USCG), and the Cuban Border Guard worked out years ago in Havana (1978) and Washington (1979), that set up direct Search and Rescue (SAR) communications links between the primary sea rescue services of the two countries. Captain Alexander Larzelere, USCG, stated this direct link "had proven to be extremely useful in determining if overdue vessels or aircraft had been forced to land in Cuba because of storms or mechanical difficulties." (155). Reciprocal visits could be arranged between the two Armed Forces, discussing items of mutual interest, such as environmental clean-up of closed military facilities, military to civilian job transition programs, counter drug trafficking operations, professional military education, etc. Military-to-military relations would reduce tension and enhance goodwill and

lay the groundwork for eventual formal recognition between the governments.

When Castro steps down, the United States should ensure that the 25 person U.S. Interests section in Havana is adequately manned and equipped to provide any information requested by the new Cuban leadership. The Cuban-American exiles will immediately press the USG to allow them to return to the island to assist in the formation of the new government. The United States should firmly resist any non-U.S. government efforts - from this country - who may "just be trying to help" in what could be a difficult time in Cuba ... especially if Castro is still alive.

The Cuban people have been told for over thirty years that the "Yankee Gringo" has been trained and poised to invade their island; the trade embargo has been the cause of some of their economic woes. Whatever help is offered must be under the direct coordination and guidance of the Department of State. Free-lancing relief efforts by well-meaning exiles by air or by sea, would only complicate USG efforts at improving relations with the new - and undoubtedly - suspicious Cuban government. The USM would take its cue from the State Department, but both State and the USM must be prepared to take advantage of the relationships previously established in Cuba.

2. **Castro dies of natural causes.** Will there be a peaceful transition or will factional fighting (civil war) breakout?

Since there are no known political or military leaders poised to assume the leadership role, the Council of Ministers, the Communist

Party, and the FAR - under Raul Castro - could be expected to call the National Assembly together to resolve the leadership crisis. It is possible that Raul Castro could assume the role of Presidente, but I feel that his direct leadership role would be transitory until a coalition government was formed. In the Fourth Congress of the Communist Party in late 1991, reformers did propose minor political changes to the country's Communist leadership, but none were accepted by Fidel Castro. The transition could be peaceful if the new government moves quickly, gets security assurances from Raul Castro - and the FAR - and takes steps to immediately improve the lives of the Cuban people.

a. FAR role active or passive? Surely the persons in Fidel Castro's inner circle have planned for this eventuality, but how will power pass?

The FAR, under the leadership of Raul Castro, can be expected to take steps to ensure their rice bowl remains unbroken or at least survives with only a chip or two in its porcelain. Members of the Communist Congress and the National Assembly, such as President and former Justice Minister Juan Escalona, may attempt to gain the immediate support of the FAR leadership. There may even be attempts made through informal relationships while Castro is still alive, but the state secret police would make the long-term secrecy of such an arrangement very difficult to maintain. It must also be remembered that former Justice Minister, Juan Escalona, backed by most other Party leaders, sent Division General Ochoa and Colonel Tony De La Guardia to their deaths - a decision he had described to

Oppenheimer as "justified" but "extremely traumatic." These and other actions by the civilian side of the Castro Communist government are sure to be at the top of the memory banks of every FAR general and admiral.

Any coalition between the civilian reformers and the Cuban military would have to overcome any distrust and hard feelings that have undoubtedly formed over the 30 year life of the socialist revolution. The vendetta mentality could have serious repercussions for any new Cuban government. In reviewing political attitudes in the FAR, the Cuban Air Force can be considered hard-line Socialist-Communist, the Army a blue-collar conscripted force, and the Navy somewhat aristocratic with its leadership coming from the old Spanish families. These political attitudes "hard-line, blue-collar, and blue-nose," are similar to other Latin American military services, according to Dr. Robert Scheina, a Latin American historian and author, now an instructor at the U.S. National Defense University, Fort McNair, Washington D.C.

b. USG position (USM contingency options). All of the concerns under the first scenario remain in place here. However, the USM should actively observe the activities of the Castro-less island - especially any contact between the Cubans and the Colombian drug lords. Even if the change-over remains relatively calm, the military garrison at Guantanamo should remain in a heightened state of readiness, and the plans for the rapid evacuation of the U.S. civilians, military dependents, and other foreign nationals living on the base must be current and

executable.

3. **Popular revolution** (civil war) by the oppressed masses led by a pro-reform leader. Is this really a viable possibility? Could it succeed?

Unless the economic situation gets totally untenable, I do not feel the Cuban people will rise up and over-throw the Communist government. Visitors to the island in January 1993, say there appears to be adequate foodstuffs, critical medicines, and clothing for the Cuban people. Although the Cubans appear to have enough food, the visitors noted there is not an adequate supply of oil to keep the island's industries going, or to fuel the island's transportation fleet. Fuel for agriculture work is also in short supply, so there will be further reductions in sugarcane production. In spite of these economic problems, without a viable political movement for reform, a popular revolution is probably not in the cards.

a. FAR role - suppress or join in? In the event of a popular revolution, I feel Raul Castro and the FAR will continue to support Fidel Castro. Fidel Castro has been supported by the FAR all these years, and any attempt by a group of civilians to toss out the Castro brothers will be stopped by the FAR. The exact role the FAR will play in a post-Castro Cuba is hard to predict, but one thing for certain, the military will not let things get totally out of control.

As in my recent observations of the Mexican Army hierarchy with its tradition of conservatism and national prestige, my research

found the FAR held with similar regard, based on its Spanish heritage. With Castro retired or otherwise gone, the FAR will attempt to maintain its control and traditional internal security arrangements, but with new political leaders the game could change. We must remember, that the Cuban government, backed by the FAR, executed two of Cuba's better known military heroes in 1989 for lesser charges than the overthrow of the revolution, so an attempt at a popular revolution without the active support of the FAR is doomed from the start.

b. USG response (USM contingency options).

The United States needs to monitor the mood and actions of both the Cuban military and that of any emerging reform movement on the island. When Castro is gone, regardless of the means, there is a potential for wide-spread violence and bloodshed in Cuba. The key to any significant change in the Cuban government is the reaction and the interaction of the Cuban military with the new political leaders. The approach the United States takes to a new government should be measured, and any opportunity to offer assistance should be carefully weighed against any potential gains for the U.S. The items listed under the first two scenarios for the United States Government (and USM) should also be considered under this scenario. Further, the USM would have to be ready to absorb thousands of fence jumpers at Guantanamo Bay, as well as dealing with a massive Cuban refugee boatlift problem (Mariel II).

4. **Castro is assassinated;** total chaos and civil war could easily sweep the country.



This scenario is not very high on the list of possibilities. Castro has a wide network of informants in the FAR; the Ochoa execution will keep the FAR from serious thought of a coup. There are other ways to affect change in Cuba, and the FAR appears to be willing to stay the course and live within the present system - for a while.

a. FAR involvement: Still if this event occurs, was this a wide-spread, high-level FAR plot? Was there participation from foreign sources (i.e., Cuban exile groups)?

If Castro were taken out by an outsider, the FAR (Raul Castro) and the civil government would not hold back from pursuing, prosecuting, and sentencing (executing) the guilty parties. While the FAR may recognize that this may eventually work to the good of Cuba, great efforts would be made to make Fidel Castro the greatest martyr of the socialist revolution in Latin American history. However, if Raul Castro was also assassinated, total confusion could overwhelm the island.

As mentioned above, as long as Castro keeps the FAR (with his brother in charge) well supported, the FAR - as a whole - will not participate in an assassination plot. This is not to say that a small group of FAR junior officers may not join forces with others to effect the change. If this occurred, I feel the FAR, under Raul Castro, would step in, regain control and assist the government in punishing the guilty. Without Raul, senior FAR officers would likely choose one of their own to assume control and consolidate power with the Cuban Communist Party.

b. United States Government (USM) contingency options. This scenario presents a very volatile set of problems for the United States. First, if this event occurs with no warning of FAR involvement, the United States would find itself at odds with the new FAR backed government, because it means the Cuban Communist Party would remain in power. Second, if the plot were carried out from groups living within the United States, this could provoke severe diplomatic problems for the United States from the rest of Latin America.

The United States would have to reinforce Guantanamo, evacuate non-combatants from the base, station guided missile cruisers to patrol the waters around Cuba to augment air defense units protecting Southern Florida, and place Marine, Army, and Air Force units on alert to react to any potential threat from Cuba. The USN and USCG would also have to patrol the Caribbean to watch for refugees leaving Cuba, and more importantly, prevent exile groups from leaving the United States to return to the island. The U.S. State Department would have to work closely with the OAS to monitor the potential for military intervention or other multi-national operations against Cuba.

5. **"Socialism or Death".** Fidel Castro finally realizes that Cuban socialism has indeed failed, and decides to mark his place in Cuban history by provoking a fight with the United States, possibly with air strikes against Florida or by personally leading an attack against the U.S. Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay. Far fetched? Probably, but as we have seen, Cuba has had such suicidal leaders

before, and Castro has exhibited similar behavior patterns.

a. FAR role - go with Fidel Castro or not?

It would be hard to believe that the relatively well-traveled and educated FAR leaders would allow themselves to be convinced by Castro that this desperate act was a viable solution to Cuba's economic and political problems with the United States. Nothing would be gained by this type of operation: it would bring condemnation upon Cuba from the Latin American republics that Castro had been courting for years. This action would also severely damage any thought of closer relations with the United States, or even Cuba's European and Asian trading partners. In my talks with travelers to Cuba, they feel the FAR wouldn't go along with such a plan. Still, the Cuban Air Force and the Special Forces troops may have some fanatics who may go along with Fidel Castro's desire to be a short paragraph in the history books.

b. USG response (USM contingency options). An attack on the United States, a member of the OAS could be considered an attack on the other members: the OAS (and eventually the UN) could be drawn into the fray immediately. The political repercussions of such an event are too numerous to discuss. The U.S. military options are also very difficult and dangerous.

If the act were conducted by Fidel Castro and a small group of his devoted followers, an appropriate level of USM armed response would be hard to measure and target. Indiscriminate USM reaction against the island is not in the American mindset. Targeting those individuals responsible for such an attack on U.S. property would

be hard to accomplish. Still, the USG and the USM need to keep such an event within the realm of possibility because of the Fidel's well-known flair for dramatic theatrics. Capabilities do exist in the USM for the USG to use cruise missiles and other precision guided munitions to demonstrate United States resolve if this worst-case event occurred.

### CONCLUSIONS

Since the Cuban revolution brought Fidel Castro to power in 1959, the United States has had a great interest in the progress of the Communist regime on that Caribbean Island. Fidel Castro's attempts to export his own brand of Communism to countries in Central and South America, as well as Africa, were actively countered by the United States - both openly and covertly. Russia is no longer in position to prop up Cuba with the goods the island nation requires to continue its Marxist-Leninist revolution.

The USG has been committed to the freedom and eventual democratization of Cuba since Castro declared his Communist Revolution in the early 1960's. The vast majority of the one million Cuban exiles, living primarily in the United States, realize that the 66 year-old Castro can not remain as Cuba's President and Commander-in-Chief forever. Both academics and the press have filled research papers and newspaper columns alike with words highlighting the potential for conflict between rival Cuban exile groups in the United States (and Europe) with the Cubans who did not leave their island.

The United States must be ready with appropriate actions to

ensure a peaceful, flexible response to Cuba's attempt to transition to democracy and a free market economy - once Castro is gone. U.S. policy must be programmed to begin at the "retirement" of Fidel Castro, aimed to encompass the economic and political problems of the past 30 years, and in particular, consider the sure-to-be dominant leadership role of the FAR in a post-Castro Cuba.

The ordinary Cuban citizen does not have access to the consumer goods or even the foods that are readily available to the foreign tourists that Fidel Castro is wooing to visit Cuba's white sand beaches. I feel Castro's tourist plan will eventually backfire on him as the Cubans become frustrated with the state of their lives as compared to what they see in the quality of life of their foreign guests.

**The lack of economic progress - and consumer goods - will be what drives Fidel Castro from power.** The FAR will indeed play an important role in whatever government is formed in a Castro-free Cuba. The United States (and the USM) should make overtures this year to the Cuban government to begin the normalization of relations process - before Fidel Castro is gone. This action will help pave the way for better relations between both countries when both Fidel Castro and his Revolution are in the world history books.

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